



## NCTC Fact Sheet and Observations Related to 2005 Terrorist Incidents

Bottom Lines for 2005: 11,100 terrorist incidents, 14,500 noncombatants killed (56 were Americans according to Department of State information), 25,000 wounded, 35,000 kidnapped. Counting terrorist incidents is an extremely complex exercise and draws on a series of counting rules described in detail on the NCTC website at [www.NCTC.Gov](http://www.NCTC.Gov).

There are 3 principal reasons for the numbers being significantly higher than in past years:

- The previously used statutory definition of “international terrorism” (“involving citizens or territory of more than one country”) resulted in hundreds of incidents per year; the currently used statutory definition of “terrorism” (“premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets”) results in many thousands of incidents per year.
- The “international terrorism” definition was originally used to compile 2004 statistics, but it gave rise to fallacious results (the Van Gogh assassination, Philippine Superferry and one of two Russian aircraft downed in 2004 didn’t meet the “international terrorism” definition). Accordingly NCTC retroactively applied the broader “terrorism” definition to the 2004 data as a proof of concept; this was a quick review in which all of 2004 was catalogued in May/June of 2005. While NCTC is confident that the application of the broader “terrorism” definition captured the high fatality incidents for 2004, we undoubtedly did not catalogue thousands of incidents in which few or no individuals were killed. The level of effort difference between the two years means that 2005 is a far more comprehensive data set than that for 2004; as such it limits our ability to do 2004/2005 comparisons to only the higher fatality incident counts (see the last bullet below).
- The level of violence directed against civilians in Iraq was substantially higher in 2005 than it was in 2004.

A simple aggregation of terrorism incidents is not an instructive metric for measuring success in the war on terrorism:

- The nature of attacks varies by region, by motive, by method, by target and by significance; combining the total attacks conducted by the FARC in Colombia, ETA in Spain, Lords Resistance Army in Uganda, JI in Indonesia, ASG in the Philippines, al-Qa’ida in Iraq, etc, results in an aggregate figure that has little or no meaning.
- Over half the incidents in 2005 resulted in no fatalities; in a simple aggregation of total incidents, each of these less spectacular attacks would count as much as a suicide bombing that kills 100 people.

What’s not in the 2005 data: despite the clear intention of al-Qa’ida leadership, there were no attacks against the United States homeland or attacks utilizing chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons.

Incident data can tell us much about the changing nature of the terrorist threat in various regions as well as provide data regarding both perpetrators and victims.

Terrorism remains a tactic used across all regions of the world. However, the Near East and South Asia were particularly hard hit, accounting for almost 75% of the attacks and 80% of the fatalities. Over 50% of noncombatant fatalities worldwide were in Iraq.

Of the 40,000 individuals killed or wounded in terrorist attacks in 2005, several unique categories of noncombatants bore a significant brunt of terrorism: 6500 police, 1000 children, 300 government officials, 170 clergy/religious figures and 100 journalists were killed or wounded in 2005. At least 10,000-15,000 Muslims, mostly in Iraq, were the victims of terrorism.

Kidnappings occurred worldwide, but were a particularly acute problem in Nepal where entire school districts of students and teachers were abducted. Of the 35,000 people kidnapped worldwide, almost 95% were abducted in Nepal.

Armed attacks and bombings accounted for the majority of fatalities in 2005. Suicide attacks rose in a number of countries. Approximately 360 suicide bombing events accounted for 20% of all fatalities.

Sunni extremist groups, in particular, continued to morph, merge, change their names, and splinter in 2005. These factors, coupled with false claims, claim denials and a tendency by some governments and local press to report perpetrators generically as “al-Qa’ida” or “jihadists”, made it very difficult to systematically attribute attacks to particular Sunni extremist groups:

- Most Sunni extremist attacks appear to have been conducted by various affiliated groups; none in the past year can be definitively determined to have been directed by the al-Qa’ida central leadership.
- When we did get data on actual perpetrator organizations and individuals carrying out attacks, the individuals themselves were often unknown to the counterterrorism community, and some had been radicalized in a relatively short time.
- The “homegrown” variety of attacks such as the 7 July bus and subway attacks in London that drew on UK citizens as suicide bombers was a particularly noteworthy phenomenon.

Due to differences in the comprehensiveness of the data sets as described above, a comparison of 2004 and 2005 data is limited to a focus on high fatality incidents (those attacks in which 10 or more people were killed):

- In Iraq, the number of high fatality incidents increased from approximately 65 in 2004 to about 150 in 2005. Similarly the number of fatalities associated with those attacks grew from about 1700 in 2004 to approximately 3400 in 2005.
- In the rest of the world the number of high fatality attacks held constant at about 70 in both 2004 and 2005. The total number of associated fatalities declined from about 3000 in 2004 to about 1500 in 2005. This was due to the fact that many of the attacks in 2004 (such as Madrid, Beslan, the Russian Aeroflot downings, and the Superferry) tended to have higher casualty counts than did the attacks in 2005 (such as the bombings associated with the Hariri assassination, the London subway, Sharm al-Shaykh, Amman and Bali). In general, however, extreme care must be exercised when focusing only on the number of attacks and/or casualty figures; the Sunni extremist attacks of 2005 were as significant as those of 2004 both in terms of demonstrating the desire and capacity to conduct mass casualty attacks and in terms of geopolitical impact. Moreover, NCTC cautions against drawing any conclusions on the basis of only 2 years’ data.



# NCTC Statistical Support To Country Reports On Terrorism

***[www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov)***





# Methodological Change

## OLD

### **International Terrorism:**

"involving citizens or territory of more than one country"

*Several hundred incidents/year*

## NEW

### **Terrorism:**

"premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets"

*Many thousand incidents/year*

**2005 is a More Comprehensive Statistical Baseline \***

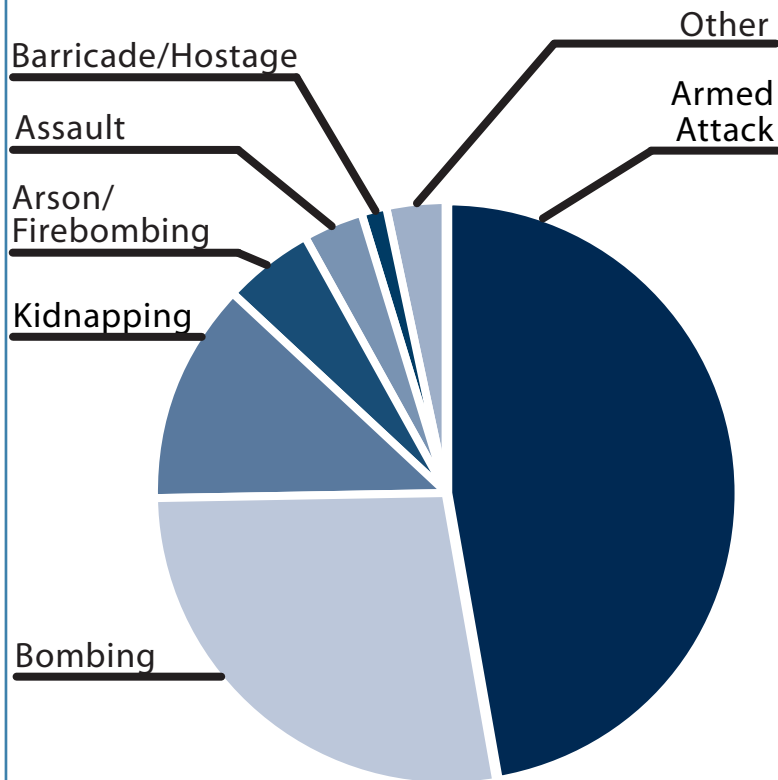
\* Applied in 2004 to a limited set of higher fatality incidents



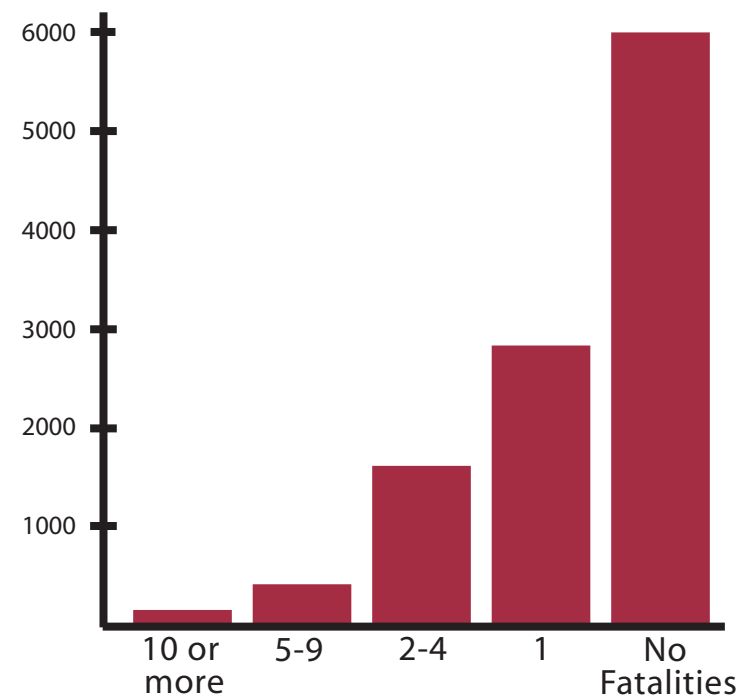
# Keep Incident Totals in Perspective

11,000 INCIDENTS IN 2005

Incidents Sorted by Attack Method



Incidents Sorted by Fatality Range

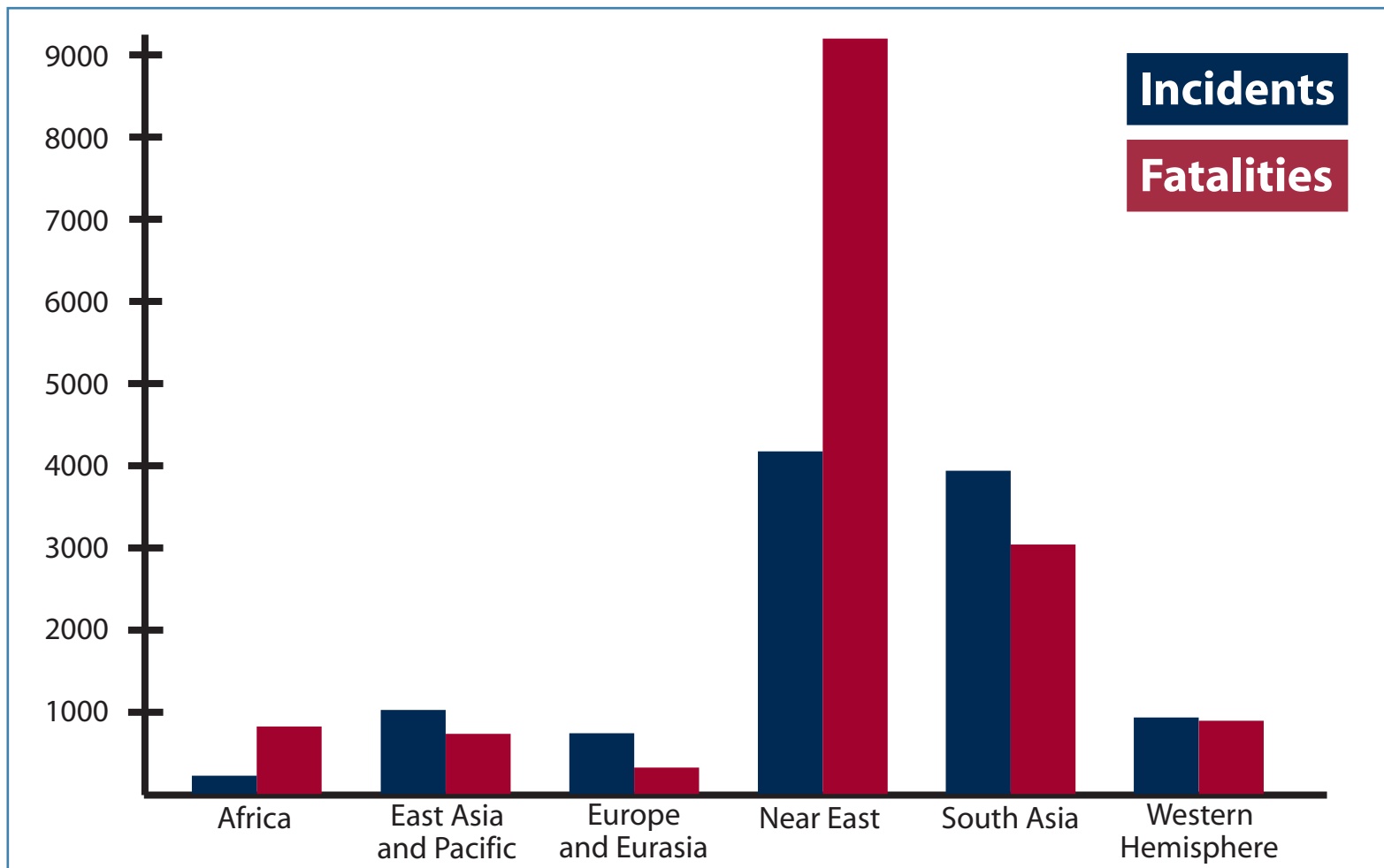


- Simple Aggregation of Incidents of Marginal Utility ...
- ... Vary by Region, by Target, by Attack Method, by Significance.

**Incident Totals Are Not a Metric for War on Terror**



# 2005 Comparison of Fatalities and Incidents in Regions



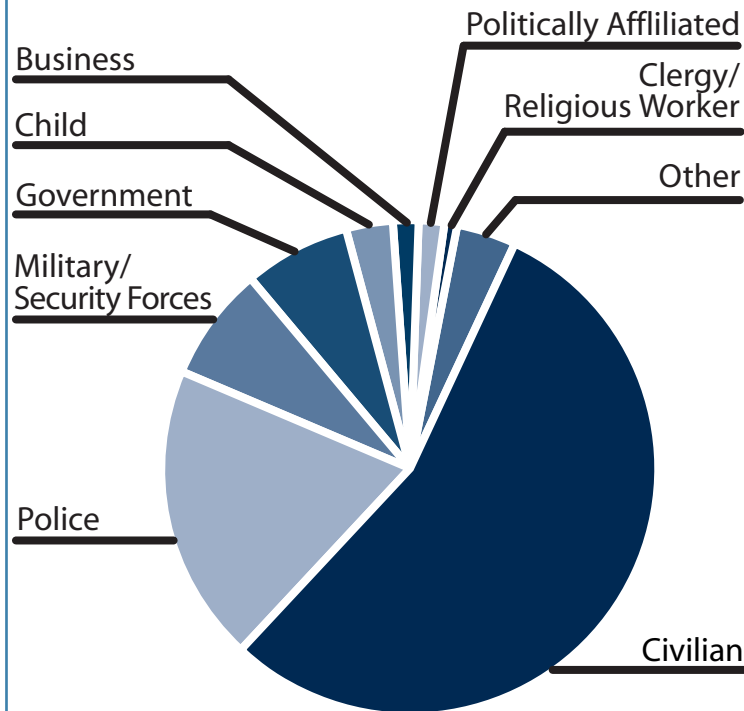
**Overwhelming Burden Borne by Near East and South Asia**



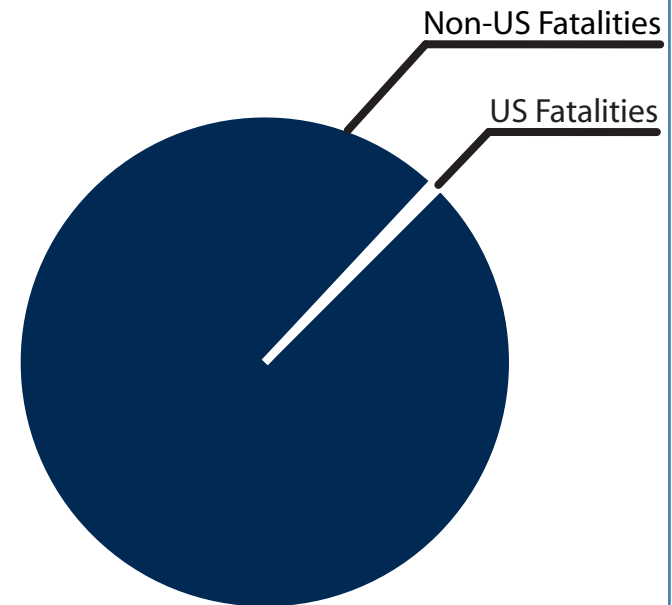
# The Human Toll in 2005

**14,500+ WORLDWIDE FATALITIES**  
**56 AMERICAN FATALITIES \***

**Death by Victim Category**



**US Fatalities as a Share of the Total Fatalities**



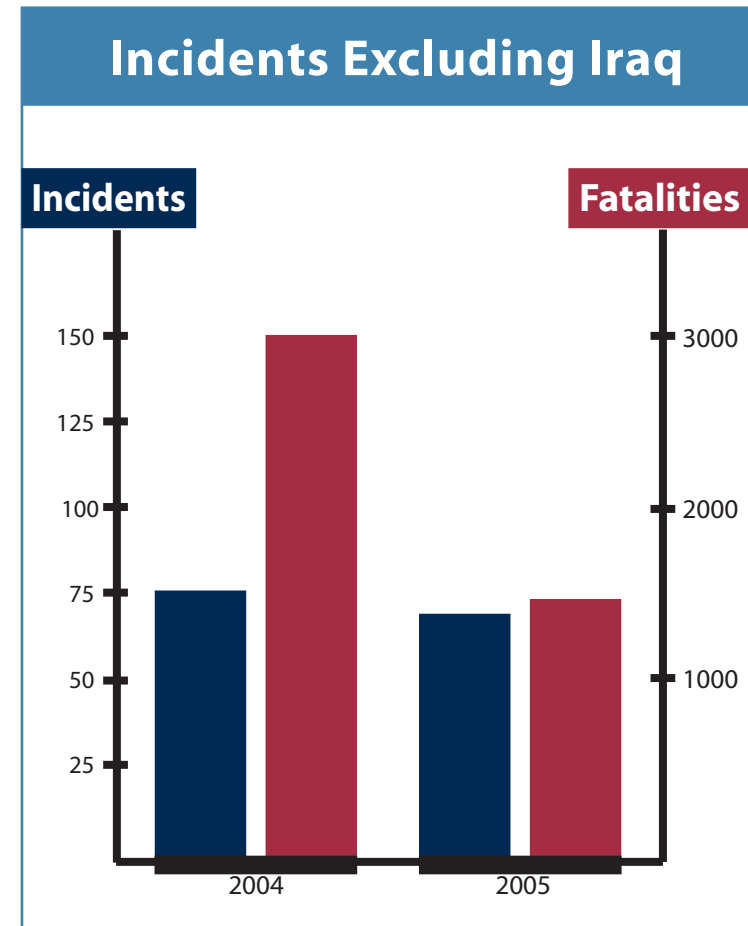
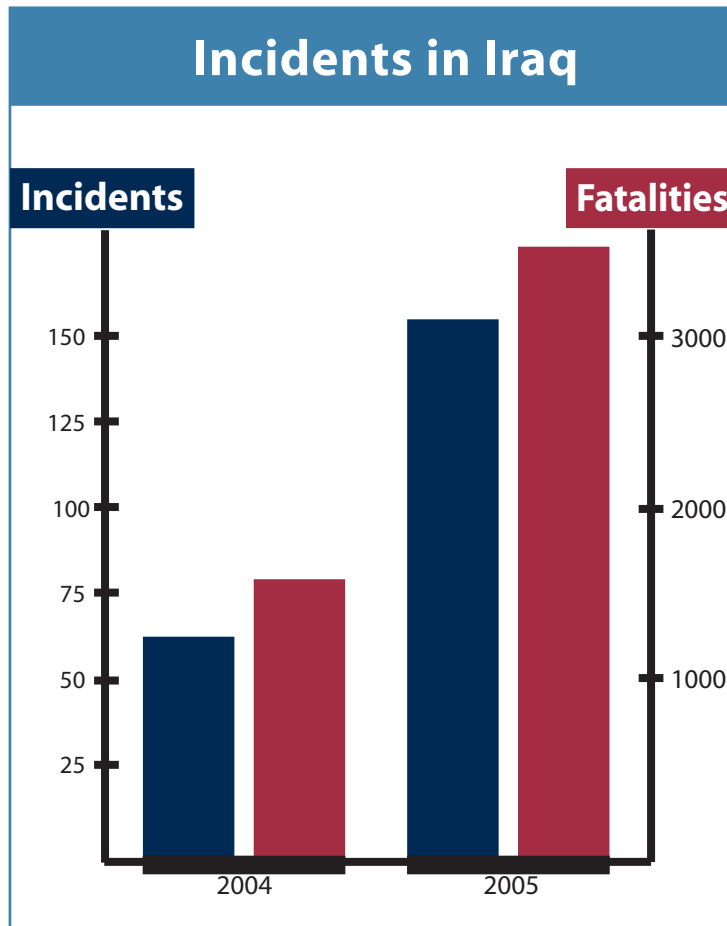
**Another 25,000 Wounded and 35,000 Kidnapped**

\* According to US Department of State



# High Fatality Incidents

COMPARING 2004 AND 2005 INCIDENTS  
WITH 10 OR MORE FATALITIES



High Incident Fatalities increased from '04-'05 in Iraq ...  
... and decreased from '04 -'05 in the rest of the World.

- **Fatality counts do not capture the political significance of attacks.**
- **No conclusions can be drawn based on only two years' data.**